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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [TR](#) [CY](#)  
SUBJECT: CYPRUS: TALAT URGES FASTER UN PROCESS

REF: A. ANKARA 1986  
[1](#)B. NICOSIA 813  
[1](#)C. NICOSIA 910

Classified By: Ambassador Frank C. Urbancic for reasons 1.4 (b) and 1.4 (d)

1.(C) SUMMARY: "Christofias can accept a solution that comes in a few years, but who knows if I will be here after (2010 "TRNC Presidential") elections," Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat told the Ambassador on November 19. In addition to concerns over the slow pace of the UN-brokered process, Talat also complained about RoC President Demetris Christofias's recent visit to Moscow and his continued refusal to use the "UN Body of Work" -- the Cypriot euphemism for the Annan Plan -- in the settlement talks. He urged a greater role for the UN and wanted the USG to press Christofias to agree to more frequent leaders' meetings. Talat also said that he unsuccessfully had urged Christofias to cease G/C oil exploration efforts to the south and west of Cyprus in waters disputed by both Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots (Reftels). The Ambassador told Talat that the USG also wanted a speedier process, but at present, it was up to the leaders to make such a change. Finally, Talat told the Ambassador he would travel to Turkey on November 20 to attend a conference and, if possible, meet with PM Erdogan. He likely also was seeking Turkish budget support for the cash-strapped, pro-solution T/C "government" in an effort to forestall early "Parliamentary" elections. END SUMMARY.

"Christofias can accept a solution that comes in a few years"

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[1](#)2. (C) Talat gave a decidedly mixed review of the ongoing UN-brokered process, only once saying that the process was going well. He griped that the pace was very slow and worried that Christofias was moving away from what he dubbed a "tacit agreement" to wrap up the bulk of the negotiations by mid-2009 (Note: other T/C and UN sources have mentioned this deal, but G/Cs publicly avoid mention of any "asphyxiating timetables.") Christofias was simply "not in a hurry" and was running out the clock in anticipation of a (negative) December 2009 EU Commission progress report on Turkish accession, Talat thought. Christofias had even told him he could "accept a solution that comes in a few years."

[1](#)3. (C) Talat, however, said that it was unclear whether or not he would remain in place after "TRNC Presidential" elections planned for April 2010. Turkish Cypriots were equal parts "indifferent" and "impatient," and could easily turn their backs on a solution if talks dragged out. (Note: Although polling indicates Talat has no close "presidential" rivals currently, the pro-solution and highly unpopular CTP "government" led by Ferdi Soyer appears to be on its last legs, owing to an economic crisis in the north. Should

Turkey not deliver budgetary life support, Soyer could face -- and easily lose -- new elections in the first half of 2009. Such an outcome would force Talat into a stormy cohabitation with a nationalist, right-wing "government.")

#### "Eroding the Basis of the Negotiations"

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14. (C) Talat charged that Christofias was trying to "erode the basis" of the negotiations by using bilateral agreements with UN Security Council members to bypass mutually agreed-upon principles, primarily the creation of G/C and T/C constituent states as outlined in the leaders' May 23 agreement. He complained, for example, that Christofias's November 18-21 trip to Moscow would result in a bilateral agreement similar to UK-RoC Memorandum of Understanding of June 5, which omitted the constituent states language and set off a firestorm among Turkish Cypriots (Note: Russia and the RoC inked a "Joint Declaration" on November 19 that, not surprisingly, omits mention of constituent states.) He added that Christofias's actions demonstrated a "lack of goodwill" and made a mockery of his insistence on a "Cypriot" (vice internationally-imposed) solution for the island's division.

#### "Body of Work Denied"

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15. (C) Talat said that the existence of the "UN Body of Work," often interpreted by T/Cs to mean the 2004 Annan Plan, was "being denied" by G/Cs. He had suggested to Christofias to accept "real power sharing" -- were the T/Cs to enjoy greater participation and influence in the federal structure, they would see it less as a vehicle for G/C control and be more willing to cede competencies to it. Further, the arrangement would help dispel charges that the Turkish Cypriots actually wanted a confederation. Talat claimed that Christofias was still fixated on obtaining powers for G/Cs commensurate with the 80/20 population split (at the time of the 1960 census, however, and constantly had to be reminded of the principle of political equality.

#### "UN needs to Facilitate Discussion"

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16. (C) Talat told the Ambassador that the UN must become more involved in the process, facilitating discussion rather than "waiting and watching." He specifically wanted expert advice from the UN, including bridging proposals when both sides hit a wall. Without directly criticizing UN Special Advisor Alexander Downer, Talat said it was "easy" working with him.

#### USG Must Speed up Process

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17. (C) In response to a question from the Ambassador regarding how the USG might best support the process, Talat urged the USG to pressure Greek Cypriots to speed it up. The USG also favored a quicker pace, the Ambassador responded, and regularly pushed both sides to support their leaders. Nevertheless, it was Talat and Christofias who had the main responsibility of hammering out a deal, not outsiders. (Note: The Ambassador made similar remarks to the largest circulation daily in the north, "Kibris," which published them on its November 20 front page.)

#### "G/Cs will keep up with oil exploration"

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18. (C) Again responding to the Ambassador's query, Talat said that he had told Christofias to stop oil/gas exploration in disputed waters to the west and south of Cyprus where Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots had claims (Reftels). Talat had argued that since natural resources were to be a federal competency in a reunited Cyprus, such activities should be conducted only after a solution. Furthermore, conflict over exploration might harm the climate surrounding negotiations. Christofias had brushed aside the idea, however, saying that

a solution would take "several years". Despite the Ambassador's prodding, Talat would not comment on future Turkish actions should the RoC continue seismic soundings.

Off to Ankara (probably for cash)

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¶9. (C) Talat concluded the meeting by mentioning that he was headed to Ankara on November 20 to attend a think-tank conference and possibly meet with Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan. (Note: We suspect that he will appeal to Erdogan for budget support to the cash-strapped, pro-solution "TRNC government" of Ferdi Soyer, in hopes of staving off a possible political crisis. "PM8 Soyer told the Ambassador on November 20 that he and Talat soon would discuss calling early elections for the first half of 2009, since the "government," already deeply in debt, could not continue without an influx of cash. Soyer added that while Erdogan supported his "government," others in Erdogan's inner circle did not. Post will report Septel details of the Soyer conversation.)

¶10. (C) Comment: Talat appeared distracted, perhaps even resigned to negative developments, with his customary protestations lacking their normal urgency. We can understand why. The possible fall of Soyer's pro-solution CTP "government," to be replaced by a heavily nationalist one, would spell bad news for a settlement -- the "President's" political raison d'etre. While a change in "government" will not force the T/Cs to leave the negotiating table, since Talat as "President" runs that show, it would mean a difficult period of cohabitation, likely with the anti-federal solution UBP party.  
Urbancic